



July 6, 2020

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Vice President for Policy and Advocacy
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
1201 L St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Ms. Podkul:

Thank you for your letter regarding the treatment of unaccompanied children at the United States southern border. We share your concern about these complex issues, and we appreciate your interest in this important humanitarian and public health issue.

The world is facing a historic event with the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The virus that causes COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, spreads easily and quickly across national borders. Countries are implementing emergency measures to help curb the spread of this highly contagious disease. Nations have closed their borders and imposed severe travel restrictions. In the United States, the President has declared a National Emergency, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) similarly declared a public health emergency. The Department of State issued a global Level 4 “do not travel” advisory—the highest level it can issue—and the United States and its two neighboring countries, Mexico and Canada, have closed their shared borders to nonessential travel.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responsible for controlling the introduction and spread of infectious diseases in the United States, as well as providing consultation and assistance to other nations and international agencies to assist in improving their disease prevention and control. With thousands of personnel supporting the pandemic response, CDC is at the forefront of the federal government’s efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. Our decades fighting pandemics gives us the experience needed to mitigate the impact of this virus on the American public.

Accordingly, Congress authorized the CDC Director to suspend the introduction of persons into the United States when the Director determines that the existence of a communicable disease in a foreign country or place creates a serious danger of the introduction of such disease into the U.S., pursuant to Sections 362 and 365 of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 265, 268, and their implementing regulations. On March 20, 2020, HHS issued an Interim Final Rule (IFR) to allow the CDC Director to invoke the authority granted to him by Congress in Sections 362 and 365. *Control of Communicable Diseases; Foreign Quarantine; Suspension of Introduction of Persons Into United States from Designated Foreign Countries or Places for Public Health Purposes*, 85 Fed. Reg. 16559-01 (Mar. 24, 2020) (effective Mar. 20, 2020). The same day the IFR took effect, the CDC Director issued the March 20, 2020, *Order Suspending Introduction of Certain Persons from Countries Where a Communicable Disease Exists* (the Order) suspending

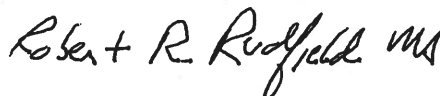
the introduction of certain “covered aliens” into the United States for thirty days to help avert the serious danger of COVID-19 from further spreading into the United States. The Order was extended for an additional 30 days on April 20, 2020. On May 20, 2020, CDC amended the Order to cover both land and coastal ports of entry (POE) and Border Patrol stations, and further extended the Order until the Director determines that the danger of further introduction of COVID-19 into the United States has ceased to be a serious danger to the public health, and continuation of the Order is no longer necessary to protect the public health. CDC is reassessing the Order every 30 days to determine whether continuation of the Order is warranted. The Order was most recently renewed on June 19, 2020.

As explained in the Orders, protecting the public health from COVID-19 requires suspending the introduction of certain “covered aliens” into the POE and Border Patrol stations at or near the United States borders with Canada and Mexico because of the unique risk profile of these facilities. For a detailed analysis of the relevant public health considerations please see, www.cdc.gov/quarantine/order-suspending-introduction-certain-persons.html.

CDC remains committed to protecting the American public in the face of this pandemic. There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other characteristics of COVID-19 and investigations are ongoing. We are regularly adjusting our response and guidance as conditions change and as we learn more about this emerging infectious disease. Please visit our COVID-19 website www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html for CDC’s latest and most up-to-date information, resources, and guidance.

Thank you, again, for the work you do to protect refugees and immigrants and for your interest in this ongoing response. CDC remains committed to protecting the American public in the face of this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert R. Redfield MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert R. Redfield, MD
Director, CDC